



# THE USES OF WECHAT AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CHINA, CASE NORTHEAST NORMAL UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to explore that how the international students use WeChat in Northeast Normal University in China and what kind of functions apply on WeChat. Furthermore the study indicated regarding what was most important opinion and information students adopt on WeChat. This research study is descriptive analysis about usage and WeChat as source of communication and contact with family, friends and as student is highlighted in the paper. Total 20 international students respondents proposing sample were selected for data collection from Northeast Normal University, 85% male and 15% are female in the study, the main findings of the study 40 % of the respondents use WeChat to contact with friends. The main purpose of using WeChat is the result showed 50% using web for chatting with their families, 40% send messages to their friends and 10% for seeking and getting information from teachers. Furthermore, there are many functions available on WeChat where people can get benefit like call the taxi, transfer money recharge money in mobile phone and games.

**KEYWORDS:** Social media, WeChat application, international student in higher education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Social Media is the product of information revolution which is growing rapidly in the last decade. It has changed the way of people's communication and information flowing. The facts that motivate people to use social media are about information, entertainment, convenience and social interaction. (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Ko et al, 2005; Ahrama et al, 2011). Facebook, LinkedIn, "WhatsApp, Imo and Myspace, they are the symbol of the power of social media which has recently become most popular across the world.

At the begging, people they used them mainly to meet friends and to seek information. (Raacke.J & Bonds-Raacke, 2008) As the development of social media, it is becoming an inerasable part of modern people and its tentacles have extended beyond communication. According to Cromity (2012) the social media is mainly used in 22 aspects of people's life including business, advertising, education, news, entertainment, research, etc. It has become one of the most important tools for many professionals, decision makers, companies, and consultants, who try to target their customers, analyze the market and earn higher profit (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media networking is creating lot of platform for young people to communicate with each other and share their experience and take more interest to get more information about different issues of society by interacting with each other. Social networking sites allow everyone to share its feelings ideas and new creativity approaches for people. Social networking enhances the capacity of students to pursue the things and sharing important things among student for more information. Webcam, video and other functions are more famous and easy to access and communicate with friends without any hindrance on social media (Awake, 2011).

Technology has strongly influenced this generation's life, communication, and education. Many studies have shown that a significant majority of university students own a smartphone or another type of mobile device, such as iPad (e.g., Chen, 2013; Simon and Fell, 2012). Now a days, according to the July 2015 CNNIC 36th Internet development in China Statistics report shows the size of Internet users in the PRC: 668 million Internet users, mobile phone, the scale of 594 million, use the mobile phone to access the Internet, the ratio of 88.9% (CNNIC, 2015) this progress will inevitably facilitate the use of the Social Media in China. According to the Tencent-reading of the report (2015) of the user data WeChat the correct posture to a text display: April Login User 5.7 billion each WeChat account number in the user groups of the WeChat active" the highest peak is 10 per night spots, the daily per capita WeChat call time in minutes, 15~29 0.7 year-olds for a total of about 280 million, young people of the WeChat coverage rate of about 90%( Tencent, 2015). In China it is already a WeChat lifestyles.

Nowadays in china, the number of foreigners is rising quickly day after day. And from this point, a lot of researchers are starting to think about the issue how can filling this blank, in the fields of social media as mentioned above and as international students, we are influenced like the Chinese people by using the WeChat application, but the purpose of using WeChat is deferent from one person to another and this study will be focused on the international student usage of one of the most successful social media, WeChat, in china.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

For this above research we have tree principal question:

What are the priorities of using WeChat among International Student in North-east Normal University? How often does International Student spend time on WeChat in their daily life?

Which function of WeChat are IS mostly utilize? And what are the disadvantages of this application?

## 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The research objectives for this research to explore how the international students use WeChat in Northeast Normal University in China and what kind of functions apply on this application.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Many scholars have expressed enthusiastic interest in the issue of uses of WeChat among university student and college in china. Juan kho et. al (2017) argued Excessive use of WeChat, social interaction and locus of control among college students in China. This study also showed that greater excessive use of WeChat is associated with higher external locus of control and greater online social interaction skills. These results reveal that WeChat has unique and strong appeal among college students in China.

Wenbo Kuang. (2013) conducted a study about the development of wechat from the perspective of the number of users, functional improvements, and business models. Wenbo Kuang (2013) report's is a comprehensive review of the developmental status of WeChat and demonstrates that WeChat's development is in line with the diffusion of innovation theory. It explores features of WeChat, including user behavior, user structure, user relationship, etc. It analyzes the advantages of WeChat in communication, such as user-friendliness, multimedia communication, cost-free usage and higher user loyalty, as well as the disadvantages of WeChat, such as information overload, the proliferation of spam and poor security.

Another Previous study conducted by Xianglong Xu et al (2016) showed that WeChat users may have better sleep quality than non-WeChat users among undergraduates. They are required for determining causal relationships, further longitudinal studies to test for the association between WeChat users and sleep quality. This study may also provide some implications for health promotion on sleep quality of undergraduate students.

Before starting the research methodology, I would like in first, give some definitions about the key terms used in my article report: International students, social media and WeChat.

### a. International Students in Higher Education:

While international study and higher education is not new, the growing number of international students in China further substantiates the need to understand the experiences and behaviors of these migratory populations. More than 440,000 international students were enrolled in China last year (ICEF Monitor, 2017).

Nearly half (47%) of all international students in China are pursuing undergraduate degrees at Chinese universities. Another 15% are studying toward advanced degrees at the master's or doctoral levels, and nearly 30% are enrolled in Chinese primary and secondary schools. The Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) indicates that about 40% of foreign students in China are studying the Chinese language at some level.

The influx of international students in universities increasingly, have various benefits which can also contribute to the diversity of higher educational institutions by creating mutual cultural learning environment for domestic students.

Here in Changchun for example in Northeast Normal University the total number of international student reached this year 2017 more than 500 in various majors and levels, among them 222 studying for bachelor's degree, 207 master and 111 PhD (ISO, 2017).

#### b. Social Media:

Are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. The variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available introduces challenges of definition; however, there are some common features: (Obar, Jonathan A.; Wildman, Steve, 2015)

Social media are interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications (Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. 2010).

User-generated content, such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions, is the lifeblood of social media.

Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization (Boyd, Danah m.; Ellison, Nicole B, 2007).

Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Users typically access social media services via web-based technologies on desktop computers, and laptops, or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices (e.g., smartphones and tablet computers). When engaging with these services, users can create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user generated content or pre-made content posted online. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities and individuals. ( Kietzmann, Jan H.; Kristopher Hermkens, 2011).

Social media changes the way individuals and large organizations communicate. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of techno self-studies. Social media differ from paper-based media (e.g., magazines and newspapers) or traditional electronic media such as TV broadcasting in many ways, including quality (Agichtein et al , 2000) reach, frequency, interactivity, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Social media operate in a dialogic transmission system (many sources to many receivers).

This is in contrast to traditional media which operates under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers), such as a paper newspaper which is delivered to many subscribers or a radio station which broadcasts the same programs to an entire city.

Some of the most popular social media websites are Baidu Tieba, Facebook (and its associated Facebook Messenger), Gab, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, Viber, VK, WeChat, Weibo, WhatsApp, Wikia, and YouTube. These social media websites have more than 100,000,000 registered users.

#### c. WeChat application:

WeChat is Chinese multi-purpose social media mobile application software developed by Tencent. It was first released in 2011, and by 2017 it was one of the largest standalone messaging apps by monthly active users (WeChat world, 2016) with over 980 million monthly active users (902 million daily active users) (Lulu Yilun Chen, 2017).

It has been called China's "App for Everything" because of its many functions and platforms, and lauded as one of the world's most powerful apps (Jason Lim, 2014).

WeChat has achieved rapid growth, exceeding the expectations and imagination of the WeChat team. After three years of development, WeChat's functions have been enriched and improved gradually. Now, WeChat is deeply connected with people's daily lives and feelings, providing users with new communication experiences.

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the most popular social media in American

and Europe, but they can hardly enter China because of the Internet control policy. So Chinese market breeds many local social media such as WeChat (Chinese WhatsApp), Weibo (Chinese Twitter) and Renren (Chinese Facebook). Among them, WeChat is currently in a dominated position than others. The Chinese technology tycoon, Tencent, created it in 2011.

Although it is a WhatsApp-like App, WeChat combines the features of Facebook, WhatsApp, entertainment, and financial system and make it more than a communication too.

#### d. Features and uses of WeChat:

As i have stated precedently, WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber and Imo share some similar features such as sending instant messages, videos, audios, and pictures. Some also allows calls and video calls over the internet.

WeChat also shares some of these features stated above, but below are some features that make WeChat not just any everyday application. The tremendous demand and success of this application is because of its emphasis on the good quality rather than the quantity. WeChat can also be used in the market by brands. This however allows users to make their purchase decisions by going through the multiple stages which is done by WeChat's strong and increasing set of features (Pun, 2015). In addition, WeChat is making its place so fast in the world and has covered of about twenty countries in the world. Moreover, since its emergence, WeChat has made the life of users much easier especially after launching the walkie-talkie feature which permits to communicate messages even on the way (Guo, Zhang, & Chen, 2014).

After the emergence of WeChat application in the market, businesses have started using this application in their business strategies and facing their competitors. Many of the fans and customers find this application an easiest and quickest way to search their favorite brands and stay up-to date with the latest designs and collections.

In addition, as stated by Huo et al. (2015), the followers get transferred to members by using the functions of WeChat membership because of the loyalty programs run for the individuals. Moreover, the attention of brands can be grabbed by making their brand logos posted at the personal pages of subscribers. Hu, Wong and to (2015), the display of logo by brands make marketers verify customers preferences which enables them plan further strategies. Other than chats, WeChat allows different brands to make their own mini website in which they may share their experiences and also describe their purposes of marketing. However, WeChat's importance cannot be neglected as it is considered to be one of the efficient platforms for marketing brands and specifies people with respect to the location and gender (Gan & Wang, 2015).

WeChat application has a complete set of smart and cool features including "Use Web WeChat." This feature makes this application different from other applications as it enables users to chat contacts even on the computer and just on the mobile phone (Wang, Li, & Tang, 2015).

Moreover, user does not require installing the application to use this program but only required to write on the browser of desktop about WeChat's website i.e. [www.wechat.com](http://www.wechat.com).

The feature of "Share Only Text on WeChat Moments" allows users to comment or like posts that are shared by their friends on WeChat newsfeed which is same as Facebook's news feed. In addition, there are many WeChat social features that enable users to chat with the random people who are also using the WeChat application.

#### 5. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

The quantitative study approach using self-administered questionnaire was applied for data collection in this study. The total sample size of the data collection was 20 international students were selected from Northeast Normal University in China while the proposing sample was used for data collection in this study.

The main objective of the study was to know that how the international students use WeChat and what kind of application and function they use on their mobile phones.

#### 6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

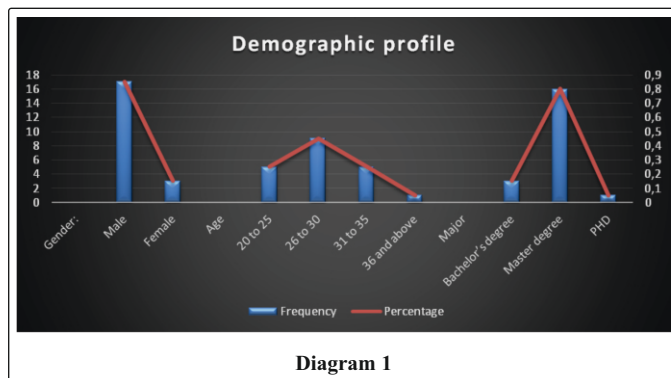
There are 20 respondents participated in this research. Because the surveys were handed out in Northeast Normal University, all of the participants are students' young generation.

There were 25 % of the respondents aging was from 20 to 25 while the 45 % of the respondents' age were from 26 to 30, while 25 % of the respondents' ages were from 31 to 35 and only 05 % of the respondent's age was above 36. However 03 % of the respondents were bachelor's degree, 16% of the respondents was master degree, while 05% of the respondents with PhD degree.

#### a. Demographic profile:

Table 1

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender:</b>	20	100%
Male	17	85%
Female	03	15%
<b>Age:</b>	05	25%
20 to 25	09	45 %
26 to 30	05	25%
31 to 35	01	05%
36 and above		
<b>Major:</b>	3	15 %
Bachelor's degree Master degree Ph.D.	16	80 %
	01	05 %



#### b. Result of using WeChat in Northeast Normal University:

Table 2 result indicated regarding the usage and stay of the respondents in northeast Normal University where result showed that 80 % of the respondents are staying in China less than one year, while 10 % of them are staying two years, however, 10% of the respondent are living last three years here, it shows that the students who are living less than one year the most of them they are bachelor's and Master students. The respondents were also asked about how long they are using WeChat, where the result indicated that 80 % of the respondents are using WeChat less than one year, 10% two years and 10 % last three years are using WeChat. Furthermore, respondents were also asked about why they are using WeChat where result showed that 40% of the respondents use WeChat to chat with their friends, which is very easy to contact with friends without any disturbance. WeChat, is more easy access to communicate with friends. While 50% of the respondents use Webcam with their family mostly respondents use webcam video chat with their family and 10% of the respondents seek information by of their friends by using WeChat.

The respondents were also inquired about how long time they use WeChat every day where result indicated that 30% of the respondents use WeChat every day less than one hour in a day 50 % of the respondents use WeChat for two hours in a day. However, it was showed that 20 % of the respondents use WeChat more than two hours every day.

The respondents were also asked about most function use of on WeChat 65 % of the respondents were using sending the message to family, friends and teachers on the WeChat. The famous source of communication with each other's in university students. The second function of the WeChat is moments where respondents use this function frequently where result revealed that 10% of the respondents use moments and tag their activities and 15% they are using web cam for communicate with their families and friends, only 10 % of the respondents use their financial banking system on application WeChat.

Table 2: Uses of WeChat among international student in NENU

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>How long you have been in china?</b>		
Less than one year	16	80%
one year	02	10 %
two years	02	10 %
<b>From how many years you are using WeChat?</b>		
Less than one year	16	80%
One year	02	10%

Two years and more	02	10%
<b>Why you are using WeChat?</b>		
Chat with friends	08	40%
Web cam with family	10	50%
Seeking information ( teachers)	02	10%
<b>In your daily life, how long did you used WeChat?</b>		
Less than one hour	06	30%
Two hours	10	50%
More than two hours	04	20%
<b>Which function do you use mostly in WeChat?</b>		
Sending messages	13	65%
Moment	03	15 %
Web cam	03	15%
Financial services and banking	02	10%

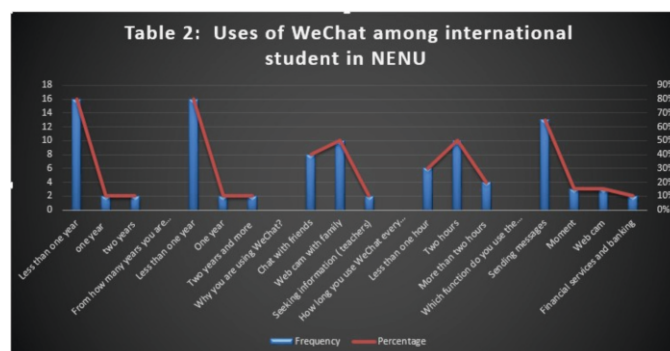
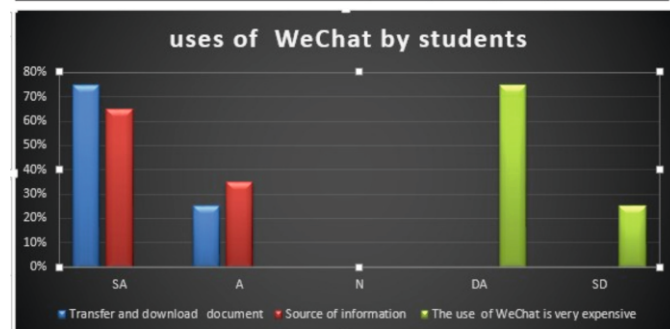


Table3: How you can use WeChat as a students

Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SD
<b>Please mention how you can use WeChat as a students</b>					
WeChat as a students	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Transfer and download document	65%	35%	0%	0%	0%
Source of information	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%
The use of WeChat is very expensive					



The result showed that all student are strongly agree to use WeChat for downloading and transferring data among groups and share their ideas and suggestions about various topics related to their interests.

whereas, the result showed that the WeChat application as have advantages, it have some disadvantages and demerits, for example all respondents are agree that WeChat kill a lot of time in chatting and sharing moments with family and friends, as you can't:

Confirm if your contact he /she is available to respond your messages. Confirm also if he /she was seen your messages like Facebook, Imo, and others western social media. Must have internet access: all application in WeChat must have con-



nection with internet to use it. If we don't have internet connection, we can't use it. So user must subscribe packets data or subscribe line internet and also Easy to get personal detail.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

Although, the study showed that most of the respondents uses WeChat for daily communication with their families, sending a messages to friends and getting some information about their studies here in NENU, there are many other functions such as shopping, banking service, and calling taxi, among others, available on WeChat which can be beneficial to students. These functions are largely unknown to most of the international students with the exception of international students who have been in China for a relatively longer time. The research revealed that the use of WeChat is killing lots of time and resources even in the unnecessary things, it has multiple impacts on student's life because too play with these media is not good even physically.

Despite China's internet control policy, most of international students are using western social media like Facebook and twitter, with majority of them guaranteed the access to these applications via the usage of by some illegal application such as Psiphon. There is the difficulty to change their behavioral pattern since it serve as the reliable and cheapest means of communicating with their friends and families back home.

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